

# CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS TOURNAMENT

## SUCCESS WITH THE SECOND BITE OF THE APPLE

*Park Ridge Country Club, Park Ridge, Illinois, September 29, 2022*

**By Dennis LaLiberty**

It took ten years and three extra holes, but finally Michael Chudacoff of Northmoor Country Club emerged victorious in Park Ridge Country Club's Champion of Champions Tournament held September 29. Chudacoff, who finished the first 18 holes at even par 70, won in a playoff against Ben Strobel of Lake Shore Country Club, who produced the same score to tie him in regulation. This was the sixth playoff in the event since 1998, when Park Ridge became its official host. Playoff rules specify cumulative scoring over three holes, numbers 10, 17, and 18. If the players are tied after those three holes, they return to 18 and play sudden death.



*Michael Chudacoff [Northmoor]*



*L-R: Michael Chudacoff [Northmoor],  
Ben Strobel [Lake Shore]*

Chudacoff got off to a fast start in the playoff with a birdie on the par 5, 10th Hole, enabled by a 350-yard drive which left him in prime scoring position for his second shot, which he put on the green 18-feet to the left of the flag. His first putt left him with 3-feet for birdie, which he promptly sunk.

Meanwhile, Strobel, a left hander, also proved to be a long hitter with drives entering 300-yard territory. Strobel's second shot found the green, but it was 30-feet right of the flag. His first putt ran 8-feet past the hole, the comebacker just missed, and the third was holed for even par, leaving Chudacoff with a one stroke lead.

Chudacoff, who then had the honor on the long par 3, 17<sup>th</sup> Hole, hit his tee ball into the right bunker while Strobel's tee shot found heavy rough just behind the flag. An excellent bunker shot left Chudacoff with 3-feet for par. Strobel had to deal with a treacherous downhill chip onto a steeply sloped green. The thick rough grabbed his clubhead and the ball just trickled onto the upper part of the green. He then holed a

clutch 12-foot putt down a slippery slope to save his par, which was matched when Chudacoff sank his 3-footer.

The final hole, the double dogleg #18, proved to be Strobel's undoing. Chudacoff striped another 300+ yard drive, leaving him in prime position on the fairway just 135 yards from the flag. Strobel's drive nestled itself against a tree root in the left rough. He knew he needed a birdie if he were to have a chance to extend the match into sudden death, so he had to take a high risk second shot. Regrettably for him, the high risk did not produce a high reward as his second shot caromed off the tree root and went way left, leaving him with a tough third shot that was again inhibited by trees.



*Michael Chudacoff [Northmoor]*

Meanwhile, Chudacoff's second shot went onto the false-fronted green with enough spin to check backwards into the closely mown fringe area at the bottom-left of the green, thus offering a ray of hope to Strobel, who likely would need to produce a par and hope for Chudacoff to make bogey, a not unlikely occurrence when he is putting from off the green to a hole location placed back-right.

Strobel's third shot carried past the pin 3-feet off the green, again in heavy rough. Chudacoff followed with a long, difficult putt to 5-feet and when Strobel's chip failed to go in for par, Chudacoff could two-putt for the victory, but he only needed one!



*L-R: De Roberts, Louise Purdy*

It was a delightful early fall day for golf, with the weather conducive to good scoring for the silver anniversary in which Park Ridge became the permanent host for the Champion of Champions tournament. While a bit nippy in the early morning, the day turned out pleasantly cool in the late morning and afternoon, with sunshine and a beautiful Carolina Blue sky and just a few wispy clouds.

With their two champions tying at the top of the tournament in regulation and moving into a playoff, it also proved to be a good day for two long-established country clubs located along Chicagoland's North Shore, Northmoor in Highland Park and Lake Shore in Glencoe.

In an interview after the trophy presentation, the new champion, Michael Chudacoff, told us that he played on the New Trier high school golf team and then in college on the University of Rochester Golf Team. He also told us that ten years ago, when he was a member at Green Acres Country Club, he had earned an invitation to play in the Champion of Champions after winning that club's championship in 2012, but he had to decline the opportunity since he had just started a new job after college graduation and didn't feel right about taking off on a weekday.

Michael's Dad was present to witness his victory and he was similarly happy, along with his son, that this second bite of the championship apple and the perseverance to work hard at his game over those ten years, along with the endurance to maintain his competitive focus over those last three playoff holes, produced a well-deserved victory.

All hail the Champion of Champions!

The Champion of Champions is a one-day, eighteen-hole, stroke play tournament, with invitations going to the current year champions of all private country clubs in the area along with past winners, who are given a ten-year exemption. Beginning in 2017, invitations were also extended to the champions of select public courses which had organized championship competition and winners of the current year's CDGA Mid-Am and Senior Am events. The concept is simple and not unlike the questions so often posed by both children and adults concerning all sports: "Who is the best [*Fill in the blank*]: baseball player, basketball player, football player, golfer] in the neighborhood?" In the case of golf, the "neighborhood" is the area covered by the Chicago District Golf Association (CDGA) and the method to determine the answer is the Champion of Champions.

**Richard E. Peterson**  
**Champion of Champions Golf Tournament**  
**Park Ridge Country**

September 29, 2022

**Final Scores**  
**2022**

6650 yards Par 70

70	Michael Chudacoff***	Northmoor Country Club		Ed Witkowski	Riverside Golf Club
	Ben Strobel	Lake Shore Country Club	79	Ari Fragen	Prairie Landing Golf Club
71	Dexter Reese	Kemper Lakes Golf Club		Ralph Houck	Deerfield Golf Club
73	Eirk Keehn	Royal Fox Golf Club		Eric Spengel	Youche Country Club
	Tom Sweetwood	McHenry Country Club	80	Mike Barenie	Innsbrook Country Club
74	Anthony Fowler	Flossmoor Country Club		Mills Rendell	North Shore Country Club
	Kevin O'Hara	Chicago Golf Club		Jim Roche Jr.	Gleneagles Country Club
	Ben Putka	The Club at Strawberry Creek	81	Jim Bolin	Morris Country Club
	Michael Reed	LaGrange Country Club		Eric Glaser	Twin Orchard Country Club
	Steve Sawtell	Merit Club		Clint VanLaningha	Bowes Creek Country Club
75	Steve Felder	Ridgemoor Country Club	82	Galen Eckland	The Grove Country Club
	Graham O'Connor-	Glen Flora Country Club		Tim Hennessy	Midlothian Country Club
	John Scardullo	Naperville Country Club		Chris Mott	Prestwick Country Club
	Greg Seelinger	Cantigny Golf		Brendan Santi	Deerpath Golf Club
	Mike Treitler	Ravinia Green Country Club	83	Matt Cohen	Bryn Mawr Country Club
76	Jason Buffone	'21 C of C Champ [Sanctuary]		Justin Mustari	Wynstone Golf Club
	Ryan Cuitino	'18 C of C Champ [Morris]	87	Terry Levy	Steeple Chase Golf Club
	Kurt Hintz	Elgin Country Club	88	Brian Schroeder	Boulder Ridge Country Club
	Marty Hynes	'15 C of C Champ [Ridge]	95	Jeff Werstak	Winnetka Golf Club
	Blake Johnson	'17 C of C Champ [Glen View]	99	Mark Ritchie	Bull Valley Golf Club
	Knox Montgomery	Lake Geneva Country Club			
	Scott Ray	Biltmore Country Club			
	Andrew Vitt	Exmoor Country Club			
	Ryan Wells	Lincolnshire Country Club			
77	Brian Barrett	Royal Melbourne			
	Sean Cocat	Hawthorn Woods C.C.			
	Sean Cooney	Ridge Country Club			
	Grant Goltz	Black Sheep Golf Club			
	Doug Krynicki	Cress Creek Country Club			
	Quincy VanEekeren	Medinah Country Club			
	Terry Werner	'16 C of C Champ [Briar Ridge]			
78	Richard Balla	St. Charles Country Club			
	J. R. Christensen	Glenview Park Golf Club			
	Ben Loss	Glen Club			
	Stino Milito	Park Ridge Country Club			
	Alberto Moriondo	'14 CofC Champ [Kemper Lakes]			
	Ted Pecora	'19 C of C Champ [Bob O'Link]			
	Brad Walker	Sunset Ridge Country Club			

\*\*\* Won in 3-hole playoff